

**Original citation:**

Amos, H. William. (2017) Regional language vitality in the linguistic landscape : hidden hierarchies on street signs in Toulouse. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 14 (2). pp. 93-108.

**Permanent WRAP URL:**

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/94361>

**Copyright and reuse:**

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions. Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

**Publisher's statement:**

"This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *International Journal of Multilingualism* on 27/10/2015 available online:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2015.1103244>

**A note on versions:**

The version presented here may differ from the published version or, version of record, if you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher's version. Please see the 'permanent WRAP URL' above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: [wrap@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:wrap@warwick.ac.uk)

# Regional Language Vitality in the Linguistic Landscape: Hidden hierarchies on street signs in Toulouse

The city of Toulouse is a major contributor to the public visibility of Occitan, a regional language associated with southern France. Whilst French law recognizes the country's regional languages in terms of national heritage, the official supremacy of French remains constitutionally unchallenged. This means that, along with other public texts, street names are only officially sanctioned in French. The bilingual street signs in central Toulouse recognize this hegemony by consistently displaying French above Occitan. However, they also suggest a covert preference for the regional language, where Occitan overshadows French in the meaning associations of street names, and their translation and adaptation on the lower plaques. This challenges the linguistic hierarchy as determined by code preference, as Occitan emerges as a dominant code hidden in plain sight. This article proposes several methods for quantifying Occitan vitality as seen on street signs. Based on current notions of code preference and inter-text translation, it offers some new approaches to classifying and analysing multilingual signs in the Linguistic Landscape.

**Keywords:** linguistic landscape; minority languages; code preference; French; Occitan

## Introduction

Since before the Revolution, the names of streets in the French city of Toulouse have been written in French, the official national language. In 2001, for the first time in the city's history, plaques appeared featuring the names of roads in Occitan, a regional language (hereafter RL) associated with the south of France. In spite of the French State's reluctance to provide official support to RLs, the Occitan signs appeared after newly-elected mayor Philippe Douste-Blazy declared his intention for Toulouse to become 'the capital of Occitania' (La Dépêche du Midi, 2001). Ever since, the bilingual street signs have contributed to the illustration of a political landscape that is increasingly supportive of Occitan at municipal, departmental, and regional levels. Between 2008 and 2013, the regional council of Midi Pyrénées implemented a schema aiming to increase the visibility and use of the RL in various domains (education, public events, symposia and festivals, written, visual, and online media) and by international collaborations with initiatives in Spain, Italy, and

Portugal (Conseil régional Midi-Pyrénées, 2008). More recently, since 2012 a bilingual city council charter has pledged to increase the visibility of Occitan in the city (Mairie de Toulouse, 2012), for which the aims are to ‘value, promote, and reinforce’ the language in the public space.

According to the most recent data available on the webpages of the municipal authority, 547 streets in the city centre currently feature bilingual French-Occitan street signs (Toulouse Metropole, 2013). These are broadly located in the historic medieval heart of the city, around the central stretch of the Garonne river in the *Capitol/Jean-Jaurès* district on the east side, and the *St-Cyprien* district on the west. During the photographing and recording of some of the signs between 2012 and 2015, it became clear that they exhibit more than ‘banal symbolism’ (Puzey, 2012), a critique which has been applied to bilingual street signs in other settings. In the field of Linguistic Landscape (hereafter LL), this type of dismissal has perhaps gained traction because the role of street signs is often perceived as obvious and regular. Ben-Rafael (2009), for instance, argues that their uniformity constitutes a ‘tiresome repetition’ which warrants little further analysis, and studies of street signs around the world have rarely looked beyond the most straightforward interpretation of minority language activism.<sup>1</sup>

However, the evolving language management activities at municipal, regional, and national levels indicate that the Toulouse signs are of major importance in the analysis of Occitan status. The unfavourable position of the French State towards RLs is well-documented (Adamson, 2007; Judge, 2007, among others), and the actions of numerous governments since the Revolution encourage the consensus that France, to borrow from

---

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, discussions on street signs in Israel (Spolsky & Cooper, 1991), the Basque Country (Gorter, Aiestaran, & Cenoz, 2012), Wales (Hornsby & Vigers, 2012), Scotland (Puzey, 2012), Italy (Tufi, 2013), Ukraine (Pavlenko, 2012), the Czech Republic (Sloboda, Szabó-Gilinger, Vigers, & Šimičić, 2010), Belarus (Sloboda, 2009), Ireland (Kallen, 2010), Argentina (Coupland & Garrett, 2010), and France (Blackwood, 2010).

Spolsky (2004: 63), is the ‘paradigmatic case’ for aggressive and successful language management. However, although the second article of the Constitution still names only French as the language of the Republic (Journal Officiel de la République Française, 1958), the long-standing State hostility towards RLs has recently been tempered by the addition of an article recognizing them as part of the nation’s heritage (Journal Officiel de la République Française, 2008). This has prompted an increase in language activism, illustrated by the charters on the one hand, and on the other by the 2009 expansion of bilingual street signs, overseen by the municipal-led group *Signalisation bilingue Français-Occitan* (hereafter SbFO). From the perspective of the LL, this has granted a degree of autonomy to Occitan, whose official enshrining in the public space appears to be legal and, arguably for the first time, State-supported. Although national law makes it clear that, officially, designations of street names remain possible only in French, the street signs in Toulouse testify to a municipal eagerness to exploit their heritage status and display them in the contemporary LL.

The street signs are therefore an essential consideration in the question of Occitan vitality. The principal objective of this article is to analyze how the signs challenge the perceived hierarchy of French over Occitan. At first glance, it would appear that the spatial arrangement — French on the upper plaque, Occitan on the lower — indicates that French is the dominant code. However, there are more subtle interpretations which contradict this hypothesis. These are prompted by certain features of the signs visible within the frame of the general code preference, and can therefore be considered as hidden in plain sight. These hidden hierarchies concern not only the place semiotics described by Scollon & Scollon (2003), but also the ways French texts are translated into Occitan, and the language associations (Tufi & Blackwood, 2010) this creates. The article aims not only to shed light on the comparative status of French and Occitan, therefore, but also to suggest some original methods for analysing bilingual street signs.

## Methodology

The semiotic complexity of the signs — informational presentation, translation, text arrangement — requires a specific methodological approach. The units of analysis are therefore not determined by the common spatial criteria (Backhaus, 2007: 67), but rather in functional terms, according to the roles performed by different texts on the signs. Instead of counting entire bilingual units individually, each is separated into three functions labelled F1, F2, and F3. These represent the three fundamental communicative elements of the signs, identifiable by the size and positioning of the lettering, and the informational role they perform. The functional approach is useful because it permits a comparative assessment of French and Occitan in three contexts, allowing for a more granular analysis of language status and use on street signs.

**Figure 1.** Functions of bilingual street signs.



F1 refers to the type of place the signs are marking, represented in figure 1 by the words **RUE**|CARRIÈRA<sup>2</sup> (road or street) in French and Occitan respectively. F2 is the name of the street, written in large capitals, exemplified above by **METZ**|METZ, **JEAN-ANTOINE ROMIGUIÈRES**|JEAN-ANTOINE ROMIGUIERES, and **LAFAYETTE**|DEL MARQUES DE LAFAIETA. F3 refers to the supplementary information given about the person, place, or event after which the street is named, exemplified in the middle sign by the words **JURISCONSULTE**|JURISCONSULTA. F3s are present on 328 (60%) of the signs — 275 (84%) in both languages, 50 (15%) in Occitan only, and 3 (<1%) in French only — and range from one to twelve words in length.

### **F1: Street Denomination**

The SbFO policy document refers to F1s as ‘road denominations’ (Mairie de Toulouse, 2009). 28 Occitan translations of the official French designations are provided: **RUE**|CARRIÈRA; **AVENUE**|AVENGUDA; **ALLÉE**|ANDANA; **BOULEVARD**|BALOARD; **PLACE**|PLAÇA; **QUARTIER**|BARRI, etc. Despite these clear stipulations, some signs have been incorrectly labelled; though it is probable that these were erected before the 2009 schema. For instance, REDOND is used to describe 34 roundabouts despite not featuring in the approved list, where GIRATÒRI and ROTONDA are given. CAMINÒL is listed as the Occitan for **SENTIER** (path/way/track), but in the LL occasionally appears under the French word **CHEMINEMENT** (little path) — for which the given translation (CAMINAMENT) is absent from the LL. Two translations are provided for **IMPASSE** — ANDRONA and CARRIÈRA ÒRBA — yet four streets use CARLÒT, which does not figure on the list at all. In summary, 493 (90%) streets feature the (correct) F1s as

---

<sup>2</sup> For clarity, French terms are given in bold capitals and Occitan terms in underlined capitals.

stipulated in the document; six contain listed terms used underneath a non-corresponding French F1; and 48 feature terms (REDOND, CARLÒT, ANDADAS, PASSADA, PASSATGE, VANÈLA, PÒRGE, CARRAT) not currently sanctioned by the SbFO.

These discrepancies testify to the ongoing disagreements about the standardization of Occitan, a polemic which continues to characterize discourse about RL varieties in southern France (Boyer & Gardy, 2001). The responsibility for the signs was, in 2015, passed on to the newly-formed *Signalisation Bilingue* commission, which incorporates etymological research carried out in the *Lettres Modernes, Cinéma, et Occitan* department at the Université de Toulouse — Jean Jaurès (formerly Université de Toulouse II — Le Mirail). The use of ‘correct’ terms is obviously important to the city authority, though the status of Occitan is sufficiently moribund (Judge, 2007) that the marrying of Occitan terms to French F1s is an obviously arbitrary process. Judging the quality or appropriateness of the translations is not the aim of this article; though from the perspective of the LL it is important to note that the Occitan terms are comprehensible by virtue of their positioning on the signs. Through a consistent spatial presentation, the F1s contribute an ‘input source of language learning’ to the LL (Cenoz and Gorter, 2008), since they instruct readers about Occitan road type designations. Whilst this represents only a small success for language revitalization at large, the F1s illustrate the transcendence of Occitan from phonologies, grammars, and lexicons to visibility on official text objects — a process which Fishman (1991: 88) argues is an essential (if rudimentary) stage of language revitalization. It is not yet clear whether this will initiate more advanced stages of RLS, though the symbolic impact of the F1s, at the very least, illustrates a clear top-down desire to Occitanize the urban space, as well as the process of defining it.

## F2: Street Name

The premise of these bilingual street signs is that the lower plaques are ‘translations’ (SbFO, 2009: 2) of established French terms. The tacit implication of this is that French is the primary or origin language of the street, which is further supported by its emplacement on the upper plaque. The majority of F2s (92%) are personal names, and are therefore proper nouns. However, whilst borrowing might be considered the most straightforward strategy (Adalar & Tagliamonte, 1998; Park, 2006), the signs illustrate a desire to adapt names as much as possible. The SbFO (2009: 2) justifies this both historically (‘names with origins in the south of France or before the Revolution’), and contemporarily (‘more recent names explicitly linked to Occitan language and culture’). This results in adaptations of forenames (**HENRI|ENRIC**, **FRANÇOIS|FRANCÈS**, **ANTOINE|ANTÒNI**) informed by a list of 874 Occitan equivalents of French names published by the *Institut d’Estudis Occitans* (2011). It is perhaps surprising that all eight instances of **PAUL** are unmodified in Occitan, despite the IEO-recommended *Pau*, especially since many qualify for adaptation along historical lines. Indeed, despite the lengths taken to justify Occitanization, less than a fifth of personal names are adapted into Occitan orthography:

**Table 1.** Occitan presentation of personal names.

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Proportion (%)</b>
Identical to French	414	83
Adapted from French	87	17

Given the detailed instructions for translating names of people, it is remarkable that place names are unmentioned in the policy document. This is possibly because there are only 15 among the signs; though many also figure in the F3 texts, to which we return below. In



spite of the absence of a clear policy, place names tend towards adaptation: only four are identical on both plaques. This is possibly facilitated by the referencing of local places, terms for many of which have already been established in the wider Occitan movement. **TOULOUSE** consistently takes the form TOLOSA on the lower plaques; though adaptations are also noticeable for places beyond the Occitan territory covered by the regional charter (e.g. **BOURGOGNE**|BURGONDIA), and even outside France itself (**NAZARETH**|NAZARET).

Adjectives and common nouns are not mentioned in the guidelines either. This is surprising, as they feature on 143 F2s (26%). Some signs contain two or three common nouns and/or adjectives (e.g. **RUE DU CHAPEAU ROUGE, IMPASSE DES DAMES DE LA PORTE, DESCENTE DE LA HALLE AUX POISSONS**), of which many (**SAINT, PORTE, PROFESSEUR**) are found on multiple streets. In total, there are 117 common nouns and adjectives on the Occitan plaques. The vast majority (91%) are direct translations from the upper plaques, exemplifying what Reh (2004) describes as duplicating multilingualism. However, ten streets feature partial or unrelated translations in the lower plaque.

**Figure 2.** Partially translated F2.



The French **POMME** (apple) is unremarkable, though in Occitan the addition of D'AUR (golden) changes the meaning to 'orange'. Whilst *irange* would also be a suitable term, D'AUR introduces the idea of gold, accessible to French readers through the lexical similarities with the equivalent term *or*. Thus, the authors choose a translation that differs from **POMME** not only in meaning, but also through a visual juxtaposition that is accessible to non-Occitan readers. This indicates that the languages not only have different names for the street, but also that the authors seek to transport this to French-only readers. Moreover, the inclusion of the second word on the lower plaque encourages the assumption that Occitan is the more detailed of the two languages, for even if French readers do not understand the meaning of POMA D'AUR, the term constitutes a visible differentiation from French,

indicating that the full meaning (POMA + D'AUR as opposed to simply **POMME**), is available only in the RL. On a street sign, whose goal is to mark out the official labelling of the public space, such ‘overlapping’ multilingualism (Reh, 2004) suggests that the French description is somehow less accurate, and perhaps therefore less valid. Throughout the city, there are sporadic indications that Occitan F2s convey more information and symbolic nuances than their French equivalents: **RUE DES CHEMINÉES** (Road of the Chimneys) is translated as CARRIÈRA DE LAS TRES CHEMENÈIAS (Road of the Three Chimneys); **RUE ESPINASSE** (a proper name) includes forenames and military rank (CARRIÈRA DEL CORONÈL PÈIRE-MARIA ESPINASSE). Whilst IPOLITE OLIVIER is identified by an Occitan F3 as a benefactor to the development of the *St-Cyprien* district in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the French **PLACE OLIVIER** allows for the potential meaning of ‘olive tree’. Whilst one might consider *place des oliviers* a more appropriate translation of this idea, the use of capital letters throughout the LL obscures the distinction between proper names and common nouns. As such, the meaning of **OLIVIER** — as a personal name or an olive tree — is unclear in the upper plaque. The addition of a first name and a F3 in Occitan, therefore, demonstrates a discrepancy between the languages concerning the level of detail offered to the reader. Another street indicates an even more substantial departure from the official language, where the **RUE DE L’HOMME ARMÉ** (Road of the Soldier) is expressed in the RL as CARRIÈRA DEL SALVATGE (Road of the Savage).

Such differences are particularly relevant in terms of the visual hierarchy. The alternative and often more detailed Occitan ‘translations’ of French F2s highlight an informational difference between the codes, but this is made even more obvious by the amounts of text on each plaque. The reader’s interpretation of the language situation is partly driven by these visual presentations, where Occitan regularly outweighs French in terms of

word count. Evidently, this challenges the code preference indicated by the upper/lower arrangement of the languages.

**Table 2.** Word count dominance on F2s.

Dominant language	Proportion ( $n = 547$ ) (%)
Neither	85
Occitan	13
French	2

The majority of F2s exhibit an equal number of words in the upper and lower plaque. 73, however, feature more Occitan than French. 13 of these discrepancies are due to structural differences in the languages: **RUE DU MAI** (May road) requires only one word in Occitan (DUMAI); **ARC EN CIEL** (rainbow) equally becomes ARCOLAN; and the proper noun **PEEYROLADE**, PÈIRA LADA. However, 60 signs (11%) feature Occitan which overlaps (Reh, 2004) with French in its information as well as word count. These include name and titular additions (e.g. **FURGOLE**|JOAN BAPTISTA FURGÒLA, **BELLEGARDE**|BARON GUILHÈM DE BÈLEGARDA, **NINAU**|GUILHÈM UNAUT DE LANTA); place and common noun descriptions (**MOULINS**|MOLINS DE COMENGE, **MAGE**|MÀGER DELS AFACHADORS, **TROIS PILIERS**|POTZ DELS TRES PILHÈRS); and historical references (**TROIS JOURNÉES**|TRES GLORIOSAS, **CANTEGRIL**|FORN DE CANTAGRIL). Although the majority of streets feature no such discrepancies, and revert to favouring French through the general code preference, these 60 mount a challenge to this hierarchy by exhibiting Occitan-dominant F2s. This illustrates the municipality's desire to 'promote bilingualism' (Mairie de Toulouse, 2012: 2), though arguably also reneges on the condition not to direct this promotion against French.

A covert Occitan preference is also detectable in the F2s which make reference to local places, people, and events. Although the policy documents state that Occitan F2s are generated from existing French terms, many resonate more powerfully in Occitan. For instance, the meanings of LENGADÒC, GARONETA (a tributary of the Garonne river), TOLOSANA, OCCITANA, and JOANA DE TOLOSA are all anchored locally, with specific reference to the Occitan world. Whilst it is difficult to argue that these terms are somehow ‘more’ Occitan than French, or that they originate in the RL alone — **LANGUEDOC** and **OCCITANE** in particular are well-established French commercial terms — their local association indicates that this is a possibility. At the very least, these signs make it difficult to argue that the terms originate in French, or that they are new creations in the RL.

The addition of the Occitan plaques therefore encourages a thought that was previously impossible: that French is not the origin language of street names in Toulouse. Not only is Occitan frequently presented as more appropriate for describing the historic context of local places and people, but it also challenges the established French ownership of terms such as *Languedoc* and *Toulouse*. This contradicts the official position of the SbFO, which (in order to conform to the law) states that the lower plaques are translations of French. Additionally, it has implications for borrowed terms, the French origins of which are cast into doubt. Previously, French was the undisputed medium for labelling the city. Since the addition of the lower plaques, however, the exclusivity of this ownership has been lost. This is particularly detectable in personal names which are common in French. For instance, **ARNAUD BERNARD** and **PIERRE BRUNIÈRE** are likely to have been considered French for years, when the street signs were known to be written only in the national language. The additions of NAUT BERNAT and PÈIRE BRENÈRI, however, introduce the possibility that Occitan has at least an equal stake in their identity.

The sense of ownership is reinforced by the shields, present on all the upper plaques, which depict the red and yellow Occitan cross, the official and nationally-recognized symbol of the Midi-Pyrénées region. Although undiscussed in the policy documents, in the LL they lend the French signs a degree of regional identity. This type of conclusion must be approached cautiously, but it is possible that, through the historic connotations of the medieval shield, the intention is to suggest a long-standing regional identity of the terms, further suggesting that Occitan is the more appropriate code for place naming in Toulouse. This is particularly striking for terms whose language is unclear because they are lexically identical on both plaques (e.g. **METZ|METZ** in figure 3); in these cases the addition of the shield tips the balance in favour of the RL, rather than French. The widespread use of the digraph ⟨tz⟩ on other Occitan plaques may also contribute to this, though it must be borne in mind that *Metz* is a well-established term in the national language.

**Figure 3.** Adapted/borrowed F2s.



The support for Occitan may be considered covert because the signs frequently surpass the limitations of the official translation policy. The term **ALSACE-LORRAINE** (figure 3) refers both to an historic region of France and to two contemporary adjacent administrative regions, soon to be reunited along with the adjacent region of Champagne-Ardenne under the restructuring planned for 2016-2018 (Journal Officiel de la République Française, 2015). According to policy, the term does not qualify for adaptation into Occitan: it does not originate in the south of France, nor does it have any tangible link to Occitan language or culture. It is likely, however, that the justification for its adaptation lies in Sumien's (2006) work on Occitan standardization, which is referenced in the policy documents. *Lorraine* is not mentioned, though the lengthy technical passage on the phonetic adaptation of *Alsace* (pp. 231-264) is possibly responsible for ALSACIA, which figures on several Occitan plaques spanning the length of this prominent commercial street situated in the heart of the city.

It is interesting that the Rue de Metz has undergone no such process, particularly given that Metz is the second city of the Lorraine region, near the border with Alsace. If we are to accept that **METZ** is not adapted for a lack of sufficient criteria, then the creation of ALSACIA-LORENA is fundamentally contradictory. Indeed, Sumien's rationalization for the adaptation of French terms is hardly definitive, as it is dependent on two seemingly incongruous conditions: first, according to a vague sense of whether a term is deemed to be 'in usage'; and second, depending on whether equivalents already exist in Italian and Catalan, arbitrarily selected as 'example languages' for Occitan to replicate. Moreover, despite encouraging the use of minorized RL names 'through solidarity', Sumien also advocates the use of French names 'through pragmatism' (2006: 398). The adaptation of **ALSACE-LORRAINE** and borrowing of **METZ** therefore attests to a rather opaque language policy, and suggests that the development of Occitan terms is driven by political, historical, and legal

concerns. From a linguistic perspective, therefore, the creation of Occitan F2s appears rather aleatory.

At this stage of the analysis it is apparent that describing unmodified F2s as ‘borrowings’ may be inappropriate, as this implies transferal from one language to another. This is of course difficult to establish when the origin language is unclear. Additionally, the direction of adapted terms — from French to Occitan or Occitan to French — is rarely obvious. This has encouraged criticism from some quarters, such as the *Mouvement républicain de salut public* (MRSP), a minor political party based in Montpellier which considers opposition to RLs a fundamental principle of Republicanism. In 2010, the MRSP disputed the growing presence of Occitan names of towns and villages in the south, arguing that their ‘separatist and antinational’ emplacement in the LL had no historical basis and threatened the equality and unity of the French people (MRSP, 2010). Following the initial removal of the signs, an appeals court in Marseille ordered their reinstatement in 2012, on the condition that the French texts remain ‘sufficiently and correctly’ visible (Le Télégramme, 2012). This happened shortly after a discussion held in the Senate (the highest level of national government) acknowledged the possibility that many French names may in fact be erroneous translations of existing RL names (Sénat, 2011). Despite the difficulties of establishing the authenticity of terms, therefore, it appears that the adaptation of long-established French names is enough to initiate the consideration that Occitan may have a more established claim to legitimacy than French.

Whilst the intricacies of translation/adaptation/borrowing are too complex to untangle fully in this article, from the perspective of Occitan revitalization it may be more important that the lower plaques demonstrate a lexical difference to French. Whilst the morphological appropriateness of Alsacia-Lorena is not an insignificant question, it is remarkable simply that steps have been taken to establish a relative term in Occitan. In the whole corpus, there



are 942 meanings written identically in French and Occitan F2s.<sup>3</sup> 57% replicate the French lexeme exactly (e.g. **CHARLES MALPEL**|CHARLES MALPEL), though almost half (43%) are adapted (**SAINTES SCARBES**|SANTAS CARBAS). From a casual reading of the signs, it is impossible to judge whether the Occitan adaptations are historically or linguistically justifiable. The frequency of these code-convergent borrowings (Brown, 2003), however, illustrate the capacity of Occitan to compete with French in lexical terms. Moreover, it evidences a clear municipal interest in demonstrating that 405 street names exist in their own right in Occitan. In terms of the linguistic hierarchy, this adds significant symbolic weight to the bottom plaques, and to the vitality of the RL.

### **F3: Supplementary Information**

Of the 547 bilingual signs in Toulouse, 328 (60%) feature F3s. These short texts provide information about the F2: the occupation(s), activities, and roles of individuals in historic events; and descriptions of buildings, former streets, and other places. Despite the prevalence of F3s in the LL, the SbFO offers no guidance on how they should be translated. This non-policy (Blackwood & Tufi, 2012) leads to significant variation, whilst also offering the opportunity for Occitan to counteract the general hierarchy privileging French. Returning to code preference, a word count analysis reveals Occitan to be the most common code on F3s, where only 17 signs (5%) contain more French text than Occitan. Although 68% of the F3s do not favour one language over the other, 89 (27%) privilege Occitan. In addition, 50 F3s appear only in Occitan, and the corresponding space on the French plaque above remains conspicuously blank.

---

<sup>3</sup> Determiners (de, de la, du, des, aux, etc.) are excluded in this analysis

Despite commonly-held assumptions about the legislation designed to protect French, the presence of Occitan in the absence of French does not, in fact, break the law. As the MRSP pointed out in 2010, the legislation widely known as the Toubon law (JORF, 1994) only demands French be more visible than foreign languages. The MRSP further argued that bilingual street signs are impossible under the Constitution, since in their view the 2008 amendment ‘restricts’ RLs to heritage (MRSP, 2010: 2). A 2014 addition to the Toubon Law however confirms that it ‘does not oppose’ the use of RLs (JORF, 1994: article 21 (2014)). Whilst the anti-RL movement might argue that this no more permits their use than outlaws it, it is indubitable that there is no legal requirement for Occitan F3s to be translated into French. This legislative opacity leads to significant variation in the LL. Adapting Reh’s (2004) translation model, the 275 bilingual F3s can be categorised as replicating (identical information in both plaques), intersecting (information partially duplicated in both plaques), and unrelated (no informational relationship between plaques):

**Table 3.** Translations of bilingual F3s.

<b>Translation type</b>	<b>Proportion (<i>n</i> = 275) (%)</b>
Replicating	82
Intersecting	12
Unrelated	6

Almost a fifth of bilingual F3s demonstrate significant inter-lingual variation: **INSTITUTEUR** (school master) is expanded to REGENT DE L’ESCOLA DE SANT ÇUBRA (master of St-Cyprien School), and **DEPUTÉ** (deputy) to CONSOL MÀGER E DEPUTAT DE TOLOSA (mayor and deputy of Toulouse). In terms of information, the majority of these favour Occitan: **PRÉHISTORIEN**|DIRECTOR DEL MUSÈU SANT

RAMOND (scholar of prehistory|director of the Sant Ramond Museum); **MORT EN DÉPORTATION**|ERÒI DE LA RESISTÈNCIA (died in deportation|hero of the Resistance); **INGÉNIEUR MILITAIRE**|ARQUITÈCTE EN FORTIFICACIONS (military engineer|fortifications architect). 17 Occitan F3s are unrelated to their French counterparts: François Boyer Fonfrede's French F3 reads **CONVENTIONNEL** (National Assembly member); whilst the Occitan elects to ignore the person and describe the place (AUTRE CÒP, CARRIÈRA DE LA VACA — formerly, Cow Street). This introduces the possibility that the street has a longer-established profile than the upper plaque conveys, and that the French F2 is an erasure of an historic Occitan space. Moreover, the Occitan actively avoids the nationalist and political memorializing of Fonfrede. Indeed, Occitan F3s routinely contradict and challenge the French ownership of the space: Anatole France is described in French as an **ÉCRIVAIN** (writer), whilst the lower plaque reads PLAÇA DELS CAPUCHINS DESEMPUÈI LO SÈGLE XVI (Square of the Capuchins since the 16<sup>th</sup> century); and Henry de Gorsse, **AUTEUR DRAMATIQUE** (playwright), is over-written by CARRIÈRA DEL FORN DE LA DALBADA (Road of the Dalbade Foundry (after a local church)).

F3s are therefore a major site of expression for Occitan, particularly in the visual impact of word count. On a number of signs, moreover, this covert dominance spreads to the F2, which becomes Occitanized through the implications of the F3.

**Figure 4.** Occitan association.



On this example, only the Occitan plaque contains a F3, which reads PINTORS TOLOSENC'S DELS SÈGLES XVII E XVIII (XVII- and XVIII-century Toulousain painters). This information is absent in French and, as on the 49 other signs with Occitan-only F3s, this suggests a more powerful association with the RL. In addition, the words JOAN PÈIRE E ANTÒNI indicate that the F2 in fact refers to two people. Were the upper plaque read in isolation, the reader might infer that the street was named after one person, or perhaps that **RIVALS** referred to something else entirely. The F3, however, informs us that the street commemorates two men, whose forenames are given only in Occitan. More importantly, this encourages the assessment that RIVALS originates in Occitan, and is borrowed into French. This directly contradicts the municipal assurance that the lower plaques are translations of official French terms. A similar process is identifiable on the **RUE**

**DU CANARD**CARRIÉRA DEL SÉNHER CANHARD. Whilst CANHARD is a proper name (identified by SÉNHER: ‘sir’ or ‘Mr’), **CANARD** implies that the road is named after a duck. The Occitan for duck, *canard*, only differs by one letter to CANHARD, which may indicate an error of transcription into the RL; though it seems unlikely that the street is named after a farmyard animal rather than a person, given that 92% of the city’s streets take their names from historical figures. In fact, the inclusion of the title SÉNHER indicates that Occitan holds the stronger claim to legitimacy. This makes **CANARD** look like a rather inappropriate adaptation, in which the ‘h’ has been omitted to conform to French orthographic norms regardless of the error in translation. The lower plaque not only reveals an alternative street name, therefore, but hints at the long-term French manipulation of an Occitan space.

This process of Occitan re-claiming is not just visible on signs relating to the south of France or before the Revolution, as the policy permits. Frequently, F3s on the lower plaques imply an interest in associating Occitan with a wide range of non-local and more recent street names. **DR LOUIS DELHERM**, for example, is commemorated in French only by the years of his life: 1876-1953. Despite these dates falling far from the Revolution, the Occitan F3 reads MEDECIN DELS ESPITALS DE PARIS, NASCUT E MÒRT A TOLOSA (doctor of Parisian hospitals, born and died in Toulouse). Elsewhere, JOAN BAPTISTA FURGÒLA, whose full name is given only in the RL, is undefined in French whilst simultaneously described in Occitan as a 17th-century professor of the Faculty of Law. Importantly, the informational omission in French means that readers are obligated to access the information through the RL. It is against this sort of monopolization that Toubon was designed to protect French; yet these signs clearly demote French to a medium of labelling, whilst Occitan serves both to label the streets *and* to inform passers-by about their relevance. The promulgation of potentially false histories has a particularly forceful effect on the F2s, many of which become

Occitanized by the F3s. The **SQUARE DE LA VIERGE ROUGE** appears as JARDIN DE LA VERGE ROJA. The information is replicated in both texts, though whilst French contains the English loanword *square*, JARDIN indicates a preference not to borrow. The same resistance is detectable in **ELYSABETH**, borrowed in French (conventional spelling: *Élisabeth*) but translated as ELISABETH in Occitan. This name figures on the IEO's names list, demonstrating the lengths taken to avoid borrowing foreign names where alternatives are possible. Further descriptions of Rosa Parks (FIGURA DE LA LUTTA CONTRA LA SEGREGACION RACIALA), Robert Baden Powell (FONDADOR DE L'ESCOTISME), Frida Kahlo (ARTISTA PINTORA MEXICANA) and others likewise demonstrate the international breadth of Occitan, capable of discourse beyond its own heritage.

## Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to demonstrate the hierarchies hidden within the general vertical arrangement of the languages. Overtly, the hegemony of French is made clear by the code preference, which unanimously presents the official language above the RL. However, there are a series of covert communications which simultaneously reverse this hierarchy. Occitan is the more common code in terms of word count, and F3s in particular illustrate a significantly higher proportion of RL text. Whilst word count is arguably part of the code preference system (Scollon & Scollon, 2003), a covert Occitan-French hierarchy is also visible in the translations and symbolic associations of texts. Occurring in unison, these aspects of the signs embody the competition between French and Occitan for the linguistic ownership of the streets.

It is evident that the Occitan plaques have been created with informational invention in mind. The F1s demonstrate the RL's lexical capacity to provide equivalents for established

French denominations. Meanwhile, 33 F3s offer more information in Occitan, 50 contain no French at all, and several dispute the assumption that French is the original language of the street name. Though 83% of street names are identical on the lower plaque, only 2% feature more text in French. This means that Occitan recurrently offers more detail; and when titles, ranks, forenames, and other information are absent in French, a powerful meaning about the respective importance of the languages is transmitted.

This is also supported in the translation of French, where 60% of terms differ on the lower plaques. This suggests that the SbFO wants to avoid presenting the lower plaques as borrowings in order to imply RL independence from the national language. The use of the IEO's Occitan names list demonstrates the enthusiasm in 'translating' as many aspects of French as possible, and efforts have also clearly been made to ensure that all 143 common nouns and adjectives are translated, and are lexically divergent in Occitan.

Though the arrangement of the plaques observes the perceived hegemony of French enshrined in the Constitution, there are frequent indications that this is not reciprocated in the content of the signs themselves. Through the association of Occitan with local and historical people, places, and events, the signs challenge the French-only identity of the space, indicating a more contemporary Occitan than implied by its 'heritage' label. This covert meaning creation bears similarities with the Hungarian place names erected in Slovak villages after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, where activists 'employed acceptable legal means for their goal, even though this was, in fact, an expression of their resistance to the nationalist state policy' (Sloboda, 2009: 183). Since public proficiency in Occitan is generally very low, the comprehension of Occitan texts is undoubtedly reliant on semantic similarities with French. This reliance on the national language clearly demonstrates the extent to which the RL is minorized; yet it also permits lexical divergences from French to stand out easily, whilst maintaining ease of comprehensibility for French readers. The fact that monolingual

French readers can access the RL not only threatens the assumed dominance of French, it also gives some justification to the widespread public use of Occitan in the city. The signs are not only reflective of a municipal desire for language revitalization, therefore, but guarantee it in the daily lives of the city's inhabitants.

Although the 2014 addition to the Toubon law, confirming that it does not apply to Occitan, appears to eradicate any potential illegalities of the street signs, resistance towards bilingual place names remains. Amidst the on-going debate about the authenticity of RL place names, the National Assembly has twice blocked proposals to standardize bilingual names of towns and cities (Assemblée Nationale, 2011). Less convincingly, the MRSP (2010: 2) has also claimed that the presence of RLs on signs is universally unconstitutional, because Article 2 ('the language of the Republic is French') outweighs Article 75 ('the regional languages are part of the heritage of France'). Clearly, the municipal authority remains undeterred by such arguments, as it continues to standardize the street signs according to what it describes as 'Toulousain Occitan' (SBfO, 2009: 1). In addition, it seeks support from the public, welcoming descendants of those memorialized on street signs to request the adaptation of their ancestors' names into Occitan. There is no data available to indicate how many requests have been made, though it is worth noting that the municipal charter is keen to justify this as a democratic process, in line with Republican values, rather than as an explicit challenge to French hegemony (Mairie de Toulouse, 2012: 2). Despite this, the charter verges on constitutional transgression by claiming that Occitan is 'both heritage *and* a means of expression available to the entire population of Toulouse' (ibid., my emphasis), since this potentially breaches the historical limitations implied by 'heritage'.

This position is indicated by the LL, as Occitan is only covertly presented as the dominant code of place-naming. Methodologically speaking, this finding offers the potential for further research into covert aspects of multilingual signs, which operate simultaneously



and within the structures of an overt or perceived linguistic hierarchy. It is clear that street signs are influential for the associations made between space and language and, for the present study, for the ongoing revitalization of Occitan. This demonstrates that the street sign is not only a marker of top-down language policy, but also an active component in the construction of identity, and of the perceptions, held by the reader, of the authority's management of the languages it oversees.

## References

- Adalar, N., & Tagliamonte, S. (1998). Borrowed Nouns; Bilingual People: The Case of the "Londrali" in Northern Cyprus. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 2(2), 139–159.
- Adamson, R. (2007). *The Defence of French: A Language in Crisis?* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Assemblée Nationale. (2011). *Culture: installation de panneaux d'entrée et de sortie d'agglomération en langue régionale*. Retrieved from [http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/13/dossiers/panneaux\\_agglomeration\\_langue\\_regionale.asp](http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/13/dossiers/panneaux_agglomeration_langue_regionale.asp)
- Backhaus, P. (2007). *Linguistic Landscapes: A Comparative Study of Urban Multilingualism in Tokyo*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Ben-Rafael, E. (2009). A sociological approach to the study of linguistic landscapes. In E. Shohamy & D. Gorter (Eds.), *Linguistic Landscape: Expanding the Scenery* (pp. 40–54). London: Routledge.
- Blackwood, R. (2010). Marking France's public space: Empirical surveys on regional heritage languages in two provincial cities. In E. Shohamy, E. Ben-Rafael, & M. Barni (Eds.), *Linguistic Landscape in the City* (pp. 292–307). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Blackwood, R., & Tufi, S. (2012). Policies vs non-policies: Analysing regional languages and the national standard in the linguistic landscape of French and Italian Mediterranean cities. In D. Gorter, H. F. Marten, & L. Van Mensel (Eds.), *Minority Languages in the Linguistic Landscape* (pp. 109–126). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Boyer, H., & Gardy, P. (2001). Introduction: Pour une histoire sociolinguistique de l'Occitan. In H. Boyer & P. Gardy (Eds.), *Dix siècles d'usages et d'images de l'Occitan: Des troubadours à l'Internet* (pp. 7–15). Paris: L'Harmattan.

- Brown, B. (2003). Code-convergent Borrowing in Louisiana French. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 7(1), 3–23.
- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2008). The linguistic landscape as an additional source of input in second language acquisition. *IRAL - International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*.
- Conseil Régional Midi-Pyrénées. (2008). Schéma régional de développement de l'Occitan 2008-2013. Retrieved from [http://www.midipyrenees.fr/IMG/pdf/SCHEMA\\_REGIONAL\\_DE\\_DEVELOPPEMENT\\_DE\\_LOCCITAN\\_\\_FR\(1\).pdf](http://www.midipyrenees.fr/IMG/pdf/SCHEMA_REGIONAL_DE_DEVELOPPEMENT_DE_LOCCITAN__FR(1).pdf)
- Coupland, N., & Garrett, P. D. (2010). Linguistic Landscapes, Discursive Frames and Metacultural Performance: The Case of Welsh Patagonia. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, (205), 7–36.
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Gorter, D., Aiestaran, J., & Cenoz, J. (2012). The revitalization of Basque and the linguistic landscape of Donostia-San Sebastián. In D. Gorter, H. F. Marten, & L. Van Mensel (Eds.), *Minority Languages in the Linguistic Landscape* (pp. 148–163). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hornsby, M., & Vigers, D. (2012). Minority semiotic landscapes: an ideological minefield? In D. Gorter, H. F. Marten, & L. Van Mensel (Eds.), *Minority Languages in the Linguistic Landscape* (pp. 57–73). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Institut d'Estudis Occitans. (2011). Prénoms Occitans pour les Garçons. *Prénoms Occitans*. Retrieved from <http://www.ieo-oc.org/Prenoms-occitans-pour-les-garcons>
- Journal Officiel de la République Française. (1958). Constitution du 4 Octobre 1958. Retrieved from <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006071194>
- Journal Officiel de la République Française. (1994). Loi n° 94-665 du 4 août 1994 relative à l'emploi de la langue française. Retrieved from <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT0000000349929&dateTexte=20110513>
- Journal Officiel de la République Française. (2008) LOI constitutionnelle n°2008-724 du 23 juillet 2008 - Article 40. Retrieved from [http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexteArticle.do?sessionId=F216FE43777B7D4B1BA52B9E43A6EEB9.tpdjo09v\\_2?cidTexte=JORFTEXT0000000571356&idArticle=LEGIARTI000019241104&dateTexte=20150119&categorieLien=id#LEGIARTI000019241104](http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexteArticle.do?sessionId=F216FE43777B7D4B1BA52B9E43A6EEB9.tpdjo09v_2?cidTexte=JORFTEXT0000000571356&idArticle=LEGIARTI000019241104&dateTexte=20150119&categorieLien=id#LEGIARTI000019241104)
- Journal Officiel de la République Française. (2015). LOI n° 2015-29 du 16 janvier 2015 relative à la délimitation des régions, aux élections régionales et départementales et modifiant le calendrier électoral (1). Retrieved from

<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000030109622&categorieLien=id>

- Judge, A. (2007). *Linguistic policies and the survival of regional languages in France and Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kallen, J. L. (2010). Changing landscapes: Language, space, and policy in the Dublin linguistic Landscape. In A. Jaworski & C. Thurlow (Eds.), *Semiotic landscapes: Language, image, space* (pp. 41–59). London: Continuum.
- La Dépêche du Midi. (2001). Quand Douste discount sur la langue d’oc. *January 13*. Retrieved from <http://www.ladepeche.fr/article/2001/01/13/221629-quand-doust-discourt-sur-la-langue-d-oc.html>
- Le Télégramme. (2012). “Un arrêt qui fera date” pour Jean-Jacques Urvoas. *July 11*. Retrieved from <http://www.letelegramme.fr/ig/generales/regions/bretagne/langues-regionales-un-arret-qui-fera-date-pour-jean-jacques-urvoas-11-07-2012-1771150.php?redirect=true#>
- Mairie de Toulouse. (2009). *Dénominations des Rues*. Unpublished Document.
- Mairie de Toulouse. (2012). Charte municipale pour la langue et culture Occitanes. Retrieved from [http://www.cultures.toulouse.fr/documents/10180/99112/Culture Oc\\_150x210 HR.pdf](http://www.cultures.toulouse.fr/documents/10180/99112/Culture_Oc_150x210_HR.pdf)
- Mouvement Républicain de Salut Public. (2010). Nouvelles Observations Présentées à l’Attention du Tribunal Administratif de Montpellier (2010). Retrieved from <http://www.francophonie-avenir.com/Archives/TRIBUNAL ADMINISTRATIF MRSP.pdf>
- Park, H.-S. (2006). Structural characteristics of Proper Nouns in Korean-Swedish Discourse. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 10(1), 17–36
- Pavlenko, A. (2012). Transgression as the norm: Russian in linguistic landscape of Kyiv, Ukraine. In D. Gorter, H. F. Marten, & L. Van Mensel (Eds.), *Minority Languages in the Linguistic Landscape* (pp. 36–56). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Puzey, G. (2012). Two-way traffic: How linguistic landscapes reflect and influence the politics of language. In D. Gorter, H. F. Marten, & L. Van Mensel (Eds.), *Minority Languages in the Linguistic Landscape* (pp. 127–147). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Reh, M. (2004). Multilingual writing: a reader-oriented typology — with examples from Lira Municipality (Uganda). *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 170, 1–41.
- Sénat. (2011). *Compte rendu analytique officiel du 16 février 2011: Panneaux en langue régionale (Suite)*. Retrieved from [http://www.senat.fr/cra/s20110216/s20110216\\_mono.html#par\\_154](http://www.senat.fr/cra/s20110216/s20110216_mono.html#par_154)

- Signalisation Bilingue Français-Occitan. (2009). *Principes relatifs à la traduction des noms de voies et à l'adaptation graphique des noms propres*. Unpublished Document.
- Sloboda, M. (2009). State Ideology and linguistic landscape: A comparative analysis of (post)communist Belarus, Czech Republic and Slovakia. In E. Shohamy & D. Gorter (Eds.), *Linguistic Landscape: Expanding the Scenery* (pp. 173–188). London: Routledge.
- Sloboda, M., Szabó-Gilinger, E., Vigers, D., & Šimičić, L. (2010). Carrying out a language policy change: advocacy coalitions and the management of linguistic landscape. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 11(2), 95–113.
- Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Spolsky, B., & Cooper, R. L. (1991). *The languages of Jerusalem*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sumien, D. (2006). *La Standardisation Pluricentrique de l'Occitan*. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Toulouse Metropole. (2013). Nomenclature des Voies, Libellés Officiels et en Occitan - Toulouse. Retrieved from <https://data.toulouse-metropole.fr/explore/dataset/nomenclature-des-voies-libelles-officiels-et-en-occitan/?tab=metas>
- Tufi, S. (2013). Shared places, unshared identities: vernacular discourses and spatialised constructions of identity in the linguistic landscape of Trieste. *Modern Italy*, 18(4), 391–408.
- Tufi, S., & Blackwood, R. (2010). Trademarks in the linguistic landscape: methodological and theoretical challenges in qualifying brand names in the public space. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 7(3), 197–210.

**Word Count (incl. references, footnotes, tables, and figure captions) = 7097**